

## ["Cabbies"]

Copy 1 [?]

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE NEW YORK

NAME OF WORKER FRED ROMANOFSKY

ADDRESS 8640 Bay Parkway, Brooklyn, N. Y.

DATE Oct 11, 1937

SUBJECT "CABBIES"

"Sure, if it's tales you want, we'll give 'em to you. You give us one and we'll give you another. Bet you two to one that our stories are better. "Hey, Moishe! He's got more tales than anybody."

Moishe, Mike, and several other cabbies came over out of pure curiosity and began to talk keeping an eye on their cabs and prospective "rides". The stories they told were not folklore or tall tales, with a few exceptions, but were stories based on their own experience:

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Mike here picked up a girl, one day. She just came out of the City Hall and asked to be driven to 57th Street. Anything looked good so Mike steered the lady up Broadway. Once there the woman asked to be driven to the George Washington Bridge. So Mike takes her there. Then she asks to be driven across to the Jersey side and when they crossed the bridge, Mike asks, "Where now lady?" "Chicago" "Lady you're nuts" and leaves her in Jersey when he seen she acts kind of crazy like.

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Once our lodge was initiating a new member so we sent him to the bath house "mikva" to the ladies sides. We put a sheet over him and smuggled him in. He goes in and sees many women around him all undressed. Then he saw an old woman bathing. She came over and asked why the sheet in a bath house? "That's to cover my feet. I catch a cold" the initiate answered in a whisper. "Well your feet sticks out, lady." the old woman replied.

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A well dressed man asked to be taken up to 161st. Street. So I drive up Lexington Avenue. Then he signals to me that he wants to stop at a cigar store to buy some cigarettes. So I does and wait till he goes into store and leave the door of the cab wide open. I sit and wait for him. Then I hear the door close and I step on the gas and go all the way up to 161st street. I turn around to ask the house numbers but the cab was empty! No man in there and no fare for that trip! Where did the man disappear? I dunno. Maybe, someone pushed the door shut and I just went off thinking my fare was in. And maybe not. Some queer things happen to us cab drivers.

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Pass a nun and you'll have poor business that day.

The first ride of the day if he is colored don't spell nothing good.

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A hearse passed on the road makes some boys itchy for the rest of the days. They're done for the day.

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Things don't happen as often now as they did in the old days. Most of the boys today are honest but poor not like in the old days when they came tough in this racket. And it was a racket then! You had to be tough. Why in the early 1920's, a driver had to be tough to stand all the "stick up" gaff! Those that could not stand it had to quit and many quit. Why we used to have several stick ups per man every week! We were pretty careful at nite time not to pick any suspicious characters and on dark streets. We'd just pass them by. They worked it slick by hailing a cab and asking to be driven to some dive where several other "mugs" were waiting for the sucker for all they could get out off him. It was a regular business till the police caught up with it.

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One time I was down at Baltimore at the Belvedere Hotel and in the middle of the night I get a call to take the next train out for New York. So I get dressed quick, grab the pitcher that stood by my bed and run out for the railroad station. Running down the hotel lobby. The night clerk saw the pitcher in my hand and he ran out after me to save the pitcher. He was a better a runner than me so that when he caught up with me he demanded the pitcher be returned to the hotel.

"Sure I'll return it, only I got my teeth in it and the water's frozen, I'll return the darn thing by mail," I said.

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